

Lake Quinault Closure

Lake Quinault has been closed to non-tribal fishing as of April 15, 2013. The governing body of the Quinault Indian Nation has sole jurisdiction and responsibility for managing the lake. Residents and visitors to the lake are reminded that use of the lake is a privilege and not a right, and at this time there are many examples of regulations that go unenforced.

The Nation recently commissioned the BLM to do a survey of the Ordinary High Water Mark on portions of the north shore of the lake. The Nation received reports that many unpermitted docks and other intrusional activities were detected and documented. The Quinault Business Committee has authorized the development of a dock policy for the lake, which allows for permitting of docks with, for example, materials and construction methods that are fish habitat friendly. The Nation will work closely with landowners on the lake to address these concerns.

Quinault Fisheries staff report that a major barrier to restoring fish runs on the Quinault River is the poor quality of the fish habitat on the lake and any activity that further detracts from the quality habitat must be controlled. Since 2000, the Quinault Nation has committed approximately \$5 million to begin the process of restoration of the Upper Quinault River. The State Capital budget currently has a proviso for \$2.8 million for the Upper Quinault and the Nation is working hard to make sure that amount stays in the final budget. The Nation has also submitted a request for the appropriation of \$5.7 million over the next five years to the US Department of the Interior to continue the restoration effort.

Other illegal activities including fish poaching and boats speeding on the lake are further evidence that people are ignoring the Quinault Nation's regulations. These regulations are in place to protect the lake, the fish and the people using it.

Continued reports of raw sewage being discharged into the lake are being investigated and a more intense water quality sampling process is being implemented at this time. The water quality sampling program will allow the Nation ensure public health and fish habitats are properly safeguarded from the effects of failed or inadequate septic systems.

The Quinault Government, as with all governments, is subject to the impacts of budget sequestration, and additional dollars to adequately patrol and enforce regulations will not be forthcoming in the near future. By limiting access to the lake, the Nation eliminates the need to patrol as often for infractions. Efforts to do outreach and education for the public will continue.

The Nation will be calling on its neighbors to ask for their help and involvement in helping to solve the problem. In the past, several businesses in the area have stepped up and invested in systems to stop pollution from their facilities. The Nation, lake adjacent landowners and local businesses will need to collaborate on a solution.

The Nation intends to meet with Grays Harbor County Commissioners within the next three to four weeks to request assistance in addressing water quality concerns.